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RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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SUBJECT: MEDIA HIGHLIGHT DAS GEORGE KROL VISIT TO HEAD U.S.
DELEGATION AT OIL AND GAS TURKMENISTAN EXPO 2009

ASHGABAT 00001488 001.2 OF 002

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public distribution.

12. (U) SUMMARY: The official visit of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, Ambassador George A. Krol to Turkmenistan on November 16-18 received generally accurate and widespread media coverage. Ambassador Krol headed a delegation from the United States to the "Oil and Gas Turkmenistan 2009 (OGT 2009)" International Conference and Exposition. Krol held a press conference with foreign media stringers in Ashgabat and gave a few exclusive interviews to foreign stringers. Adviser to Special Envoy on Eurasian Energy Daniel Stein accompanied Krol and answered a few questions at the press conference. Foreign media accurately highlighted Krol's OGT remarks. END SUMMARY

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT DAS KROL MEETING WITH TURKMEN LEADER

13. (U) On November 16, the Azeri news agency "Trend" (English) announced Krol's arrival based on the U.S. Embassy's press release. The following day, the "Watan" evening TV news program (Turkmen) gave a generally accurate highlight story on Krol's meeting with President Berdimuhamedov, praising both sides' interest in developing partnership in key Turkmen-American partnership areas, such as trade, economy and humanitarian sectors. The story also underlined the meeting's particular focus on cooperation in the fuel and energy sectors. The broadcast carried Krol's interview remarks following the meeting. Krol gave a few greetings in Turkmen and noted the meeting was efficient. Krol also gave positive remarks about the oil and gas conference, emphasizing its importance for Turkmenistan. The following day, state-run dailies "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 49,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 38,091) printed stories that mirrored the "Watan" story on their front pages. The government-run website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (www.turkmenistan.gov.tm) (Turkmen, Russian and English) accurately highlighted the meeting with a similar story as carried on the "Watan" broadcast.

14. (U) On November 17-18, Russian news agencies "ITAR-TASS" (Russian, English) and "RIA Orienda" (English), Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian) carried accurate stories on the meeting based on

state media reporting. On November 19, Kyrgyzstan-based news website "CA-News" (Russian) also published an accurate story on the meeting.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH KROL AND STEIN

15. (U) On November 17, Deputy Assistant Secretary Krol gave exclusive interviews to "Reuters" and RFE/RL's Turkmen language service. The same day "Reuters" (English) and RFE/RL's Turkmen language service carried generally accurate stories based on their interviews with Krol. Krol stressed the interest of U.S. companies' in investing in Turkmenistan's oil and gas infrastructure.

16. (U) A November 20 article at "Eurasianet.org" accurately cited Krol's remark from the press conference on the issue regarding Turkmenistan's restrictions on international travel for a number of students studying at American Universities. Krol noted he had raised the issue with the Foreign Minister and indicated Turkmenistan's intentions to solve the issue.

17. (U) On November 17, highlighting the press conference, several media outlets cited Stein's remarks regarding the Caspian dispute between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. The "Associated Press" (English) accurately quoted Stein as saying that it was still possible to carry energy projects across the Caspian Sea without final agreements over territorial delimitation and noted that the United States and Europe had encouraged the sides to reach an agreement. He also emphasized that American companies, with their great experience of working in difficult conditions, would be helpful in developing Caspian blocks. The same day, "CNBC" reprinted the "Associated Press" story. Russian news agency "RIA Novosti" (Russian) carried similar remarks by Stein but extrapolated that the United States offered assistance in resolving the dispute.

ASHGABAT 00001488 002.2 OF 002

The same day, Kazakh information agency "Novosti-Kazakhstan" (Russian), Azeri news agencies "News.Az" (English) and "Azer-Press" (English, Russian) carried stories with similar content and carried the same inaccuracy. In subsequent days, Azeri based "ABC.AZ" (English, Russian), "APA" (English) and Russian news source "What the Paper Says (WPS)" (Russian, English) also carried the same misleading reports.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT KROL'S REMARKS AT OGT 2009

16. (U) On November 18, Deputy Assistant Secretary Krol gave his remarks as the first foreign speaker at the OGT 2009. The same day, Russian news agency "ITAR-TASS" (Russian), Azeri news agency "Trend" (Russian, English) highlighted Krol's address at the conference. The stories carried accurate quotes from Krol's remarks about the importance of energy diversification, economic reforms and transparency. Krol also emphasized that the United States considered energy security to be a priority issue and that Central Asia was an important region in the global energy picture. (NOTE: The Embassy prepared and distributed the transcript of Krol's OGT remarks in English, Russian and Turkmen on the same day. END NOTE.)

18. (U) State "Turkmenistan" TV channel (Russian, Turkmen, English, Chinese, Arabic, Persian, French) scheduled its story to highlight their interview with Krol from OGT 2009 for later in the week.

19. (SBU) COMMENT: In general, the media widely covered DAS Krol and accurately quoted him. As usual, the Turkmen state-run media ignored the substance of his remarks, choosing instead to focus on President Berdimuhamedov and generalities instead of specifics. Interestingly, while Krol received no print coverage after his remarks at the conference, Chevron Executive Doug Uchikura's remarks received front-page treatment in both "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 49,091) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 38,091). END COMMENT.

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